

**IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF WEST VIRGINIA**

BRIAN KNIGHT,

Plaintiff,

v.

CANDICE MCLAUGHLIN,

Defendant.

: Case No.:

:
:
:
:
:
:
:
:
:
:

Jury trial demanded

ELECTRONICALLY
FILED
Nov 09 2020
U.S. DISTRICT COURT
Northern District of WV

1:20-cv-254

Judge Thomas S. Kleeh

COMPLAINT

Plaintiff, Brian Knight, files this Complaint against Defendant Candice McLaughlin.

THE PARTIES

1. Brian Knight is an adult individual who resides in Morgantown, West Virginia.
2. Candice McLaughlin is an adult individual who now resides in St. Petersburg, Florida, and previously lived in Morgantown, West Virginia.

JURISDICTION AND VENUE

3. This Court has subject matter jurisdiction over this action pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §1332 because (i) Knight is a citizen of West Virginia and McLaughlin is a citizen of Florida, and (ii) the amount in controversy is more than \$75,000, exclusive of interest and costs.
4. Venue is proper pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1391 because the events giving rise to Knight's claims occurred in this judicial district.

BACKGROUND

5. Knight and McLaughlin, at the time of the events at issue in this matter, were acquaintances who had previously engaged in a romantic relationship.

6. Both Knight and McLaughlin participate in a group affiliated with the Pennsic War, an annual American medieval camping event held by the Society of Creative Anachronism. Members of that group refer to themselves as “Scadian.”

7. McLaughlin belonged to a Facebook group of more than 360 members entitled “Ladies who don’t f*cking lunch” (the “Group”).

8. The Group is made up of female members of the Scadian community.

9. On June 30, 2020, McLaughlin made a post to the Group that her daughter (who is now approximately 26 years old) had been sexually assaulted at the age of twelve.

10. McLaughlin then followed up with a comment to the post identifying Knight as the person who allegedly assaulted her daughter and linked directly to Knight’s Facebook profile. McLaughlin’s Facebook post and subsequent comment shall be referred to as the “Statements.”

[REMAINDER OF THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK]

11. This is a screenshot of the Statements:



12. The Statements made by McLaughlin are false.
13. Knight previously had a romantic relationship with McLaughlin's daughter for approximately five years, beginning when the daughter was 19 years old.
14. While Knight had a romantic relationship with McLaughlin's daughter beginning when the daughter was 19, he never sexually assaulted her.

15. Knight had absolutely no physical contact sexual in nature with McLaughlin's daughter when she was twelve, or at any point up until she was 19.

16. Neither McLaughlin nor her daughter had ever reported the alleged assault to law enforcement, which alleged incident took place 14 years ago. After Knight threatened McLaughlin with a defamation lawsuit after she posted the Statements in June 2020, McLaughlin filed a police report as a defensive action. The McLaughlin police report was filed nearly 14 years after the alleged incident. Upon information and belief, McLaughlin's daughter herself did not make the police report, nor did she assist in its filing. The police report did not result in any action against Knight.

17. The Statements were intended to poison the Pennsic community against Knight.

18. The Statements reached a wide audience of over 366 members of the community in which Knight actively participates. The Statements were shared with many other Scadians outside of the Group.

19. The Statements led to a firestorm of hateful comments regarding Knight within the Pennsic community and far beyond the Group.

20. The Statements were widely shared and reposted by others.

21. The Statements were intended to bring shame and disgrace upon Knight.

22. The Statements have caused Knight mental anguish, insult, indignity and humiliation.

COUNT I

Defamation

23. All the preceding paragraphs are herein fully incorporated by reference.

24. The Statements, as outlined above, are defamatory.

25. McLaughlin published the Statements to the Group (and possibility beyond the Group).
26. That Statements to the Group were not privileged.
27. The Statements are false.
28. The Statements specifically referenced Knight and provided a direct link to Knight's Facebook page.
29. McLaughlin made the Statements purposefully and with malice.
30. Knight suffered severe damages as a result of the Statements, including, but not limited to, severe damage to his reputation, mental anguish, insult, indignity and humiliation.

Request for Relief

WHEREFORE, Brian Knight respectfully requests that this Honorable Court enter judgment in his favor and against Candice McLaughlin in an amount in excess of \$75,000.

Respectfully submitted,

STRASSBURGER McKENNA GUTNICK
& GEFSKY

By: /s/ Danielle L. Dietrich
Danielle L. Dietrich
WV ID. No. 10151
Four Gateway Center, Suite 2200
444 Liberty Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15222
T - (412) 281-5423
F - (412) 281-8264

Counsel for Plaintiff